WHAT SHALL WE DO FOR THE CHILDREN IN TIME OF WAR?

In Great Britain after two years of war, the Committee on Health of Munition Workers found it necessary to say,

> **"At the present time when war is destroying so much of its best manhood, the nation is under special obligation to secure that the rising generation grows up strong and hardy, both in body and character. It is necessary to guard not only against immediate breakdown, but also against the imposition of strains that may stunt future growth and development."**

Here in America we must remember this at the start. In our eagerness to do our bit, we must not forget the children.

National Child Labor Committee
INCORPORATED
105 East 22d Street
New York City

Pamphlet 276 ($2.50 a hundred) Sixth Edition February, 1918

IN EUROPE in the stress of sudden warfare, the children were, for the moment, forgotten.

In Great Britain, for instance, some of the first war economies were in the educational system. School buildings were taken over for military purposes; teachers enlisted; repairs, building, appropriations, and supplies were cut down; evening schools, medical inspection, school dentistry, and free lunches were stopped or cut down; and thousands of children, many only 11 or 12, were excused from school to go to work.

The laws governing hours of labor in munition plants were broken down. Club work, settlement work, and general child welfare work were crippled or stopped.

The results are:—

Thousands of children in England are without teachers or schools.

600,000 children have left school prematurely to go to work.

There are about 3,000,000 children between 12 and 17 out of school in England. In some cities there are 12,000 to 15,000 absentees from school daily.

Sir James Yoxall said in Parliament, **"A large portion of our elementary school system is in ruins—I will not say as desolate as the ruins of Louvain, but there is to some extent a likeness."**

Sidney Webb predicts that, **"Peace will involve almost the remaking of the nation's educational machinery."**

Sir Herbert Fisher has started the movement for rebuilding the educational system by calling for **an increase of £3,829,000 over last year's educational budget and introducing a schooling bill in Parliament that will reorganize English free education.**

Juvenile delinquency in England has increased about 40 per cent since the war began.

The Health of Munition Workers Committee has stated that "munition workers in general have been allowed to reach a state of reduced efficiency and lowered health which might have been avoided **without reduction of output** by attention to the details of daily and weekly rest."

And this committee says that children **"are drawing on their strength,"** and is anxious to know what will become of them after the war.

Reports from other belligerent countries are meagre but apparently conditions are much the same.

In Berlin in 1915 there were twice as many crimes committed by children as in 1914.

It is reported that 8,000 children between 14 and 16 are working in Prussian mines.

WHAT SHALL WE DO IN AMERICA?

The President said in a letter to the National Child Labor Committee:

> "As the labor situation created by the war develops, I am more interested than ever, if that were possible, in throwing all the safeguards possible around the labor of women and children in order that no intolerable or injurious burden may be placed upon them. I am, therefore, very glad indeed that the National Child Labor Committee is diligently continuing its labors and extending its vigilance in this important matter. By doing so it is contributing to efficiency and economy of production, as well as to the preservation of life and health."

You, as a friend of this organization which has for 13 years fought for the welfare and development of American children, can help to preserve our American ideal of child protection in a very practical way.

1. Oppose all attempts to break down the school system in your vicinity either by relaxing enforcement of compulsory education laws or by cutting down school funds.

   The educational situation in England has become so serious that even in the midst of war she is considering Sir Herbert Fisher's bill to

   1. *Establish a compulsory 14-year schooling limit without exemptions;*
   2. *Do away with the part-time system;*
   3. *Establish continuation schools for children up to 18, etc.*

   England is progressing even in war. America must not go backwards.

2. Oppose all attempts to break down the labor laws of your state, either by giving young children special permits to work, or by exempting certain establishments from the laws limiting hours of labor.

   In England where they relaxed the enforcement of the laws they have found **"too big a price is being paid for the output,"** and have returned to shorter hours and regulated labor.

3. Support as usual local and national social agencies.

   Do not allow settlements, recreation centers, health boards, juvenile protective associations, child welfare and child labor committees, and other organizations that it has taken years to build up to be destroyed.

4. Support the enforcement of the federal child labor law which went into effect September 1, 1917.

   An attempt to block the law resulted in a test case tried in the Western District of North Carolina in which the Judge decided the law is unconstitutional, thereby making it non-operative in that district of the greatest cotton-mill state of the South.

   A well-known authority commenting on the decision says it is amazing that "at a moment when the government is directing the mines, the factories and the farms of the nation,

is saying what price producers shall receive for their products, is conscripting the manhood of the country for the national armies, it is informed that it cannot regulate commerce with the end in view of conserving the health of **those of whom its future armies must be composed."**

The Supreme Court of the United States will settle the question of constitutionality and we are convinced the law will be upheld.

But we need your support in keeping the public informed as to the law, so that they will encourage its enforcement and not block it as its enemies will attempt to do.

England's verdict as to the children leaving school for work in war time is

> **"We have no right to handicap these children because of the State's necessities of the moment."**

Will you help us to see that American children are not handicapped?

Owen R. Lovejoy summed up the situation at the last national conference on child labor when he said:

> **"Those of us who have dedicated ourselves to the protection of these defenceless ones must keep our heads clear and our motives unmixed, determining that whatever happens all other forms of treasure, all other forms of wealth, all other methods of defense shall be sacrificed before we compel the children of America to pass through the fire."**

National Child Labor Committee

(Incorporated; supported by voluntary contributions)

105 East 22d Street, New York City

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